
NH State spelling bee puts nerves to the test - Union Leader.com

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New Hampshire Sunday News



Hannah Miller of Rundlett Middle School in Concord is the winner of the New Hampshire State Spelling Bee. (Mark Bolton/Union Leader)



Nicholas Couto of the of the Academy for Science and Design in Nashua is at the microphone during the New Hampshire State Spelling Bee in Concord on Saturday. (Mark bolton/union leader)



Second-place finisher Isabelle Russell, a student at Hudson Memorial School, grimaces as she ponders a word during the New Hampshire State Spelling Bee. (Mark Bolton/Union Leader)
CONCORD - Good thing Hannah Miller paid attention in Latin class.

The eighth-grader at Concord's Rundlett Middle School eighth-grader was crowned state spelling bee champion Saturday after 17 rounds of nerve-wracking competition on stage at the Capitol Center for the Arts.

Hannah, 12, the daughter of Kirby Steady and Justin Miller, thanked her parents and friends for quizzing her on words to get ready for the state bee.

But she credited her Latin "magistra," Nancy Emery, for the linguistic expertise that helped her correctly spell "subaqueous" to win the 3½-hour competition.

"I don't think I would have gotten it if I didn't take Latin," she said.

It was Miller's first trip to the state bee.

In all, 192 youngsters competed in the 60th annual New Hampshire State Spelling Bee championship, sponsored by the New Hampshire Union Leader. They qualified for the event by winning their school bees. After a written test Saturday morning, 37 made it to the big stage.

Among them was Garima Rastogi, a 7-year-old first-grader at Green Valley Montessori School in Pembroke. She was one of three first-graders in the contest this year and the only one to make it to the final round.

The youngster, who lives in Concord, quickly proved it wasn't a fluke, spelling her way through six rounds - including "euthanasia," "Swahili" and "ingenious" - before missing on "flexuosity" in the seventh.

By then, veteran pronouncer Carolyn D'Aquila, herself the 1996 state champ, had moved to words not included in the 2013 "Spell It!" study guide. The change narrowed the field to six spellers by Round 8 and just four a round later.



In the end, it was down to just two: Miller and Isabelle Russell, a 14-year-old eighth-grader at Hudson Memorial School.

The two battled six rounds head to head, each gaining the advantage at times as the other misspelled a word. But spelling bee rules dictate that a speller has to spell an additional word correctly to become the champion, so the advantage seesawed back and forth.

Russell got through "stabilimeter," "stereognosis," "coralline" and "viscount." But in Round 17, she stumbled over "synusia," and it was up to Miller.

First she correctly spelled "temerarious." Then came the final word, "subaqueous," and she knew she had won.

There were big cheers from the crowd as Miller stood grinning and waving.

As the other spellers returned to the stage to claim their trophies, Miller and Russell exchanged smiles and high-fives in acknowledgement of a battle well-waged.

Miller is an avid reader and has a purple belt in karate. She enjoys writing and is in her school play, "The Music Man."

As the state spelling bee champion, she wins a trip to Washington, D.C., with a parent to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in May.

Shannon Sullivan, community relations manager for the New Hampshire Union Leader, told Miller, "We know you'll do an awesome job representing New Hampshire."

Sullivan also congratulated Emma Bradley of Bow Memorial School for getting a perfect score on the written exam.

Judges for Saturday's state championship, from the Rochester Elks, were Don Chesnel, Gerry Gravel and Robert Steele. The Elks organization has supported the spelling bee program since its beginning. Also in attendance representing the Elks and doing the official recording were Calvin and Pam Goude from the Lebanon Elks Lodge.

